

Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUEBEC 00091 031628Z
ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT: CA
SUBJECT: LEVESQUE CONTINUES TO BALANCE HIS CONSTITUENCIES

REF: A) MONTREAL 0305, B) QUEBEC 0031

1. PQ NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING REPORTED IN REFTEL "A"
DEMONSTRATED ANEW
THE DIFFICULTY OF RENE LEVESQUE'S TASK OF BALANCING HIS ROLE AS
PREMIER WITH HIS ROLE AS LEADER OF A POPULIST POLITICAL
MOVEMENT LIKE THE PARTI QUEBECOIS. AT A SIMILAR MEETING IN DECEMBER,
HE HAD CLEARLY ESTABLISHED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT BE
CONTROLLED BY PARTY POLICIES NOR COULD THE PQ TAKE ITSELF FOR
THE GOVERNMENT BY DICTATING PRIORITIES TO THE GOVERNMENT.
NONETHELESS, CLAUSES IN THE PQ'S CONSTITUTION STATING THAT A PQ
GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUBMIT "GENERAL POLITICAL DECISIONS" TO THE
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR APPROVAL FORCED LEVESQUE TO BRIEF
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PROGRAM FOR UPCOMING SESSION OF QUEBEC NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY. THIS HE DID. HOWEVER, EVER COGNIZANT OF HIS PRIMARY RESPON-

SIBILITY TO PEOPLE OF QUEBEC THROUGH THEIR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES
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PAGE 02 QUEBEC 00091 031628Z

(HENCE TRADITION OF PRIOR SUBMISSION OF PROGRAM TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY),

LEVESQUE KEPT IMPORTANT SESSIONS OF NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING SECRET
AND EVEN THEN IS REPORTED TO HAVE REVEALED VERY LITTLE.
EVEN SO, NUMBER OF CRITICS ACCUSED HIM OF GIVING PARTY
OFFICIALS UNFAIR PREVIEW OF GOQ PROGRAM. AT SAME TIME,
MANY OF NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS FEEL THEY

GOT SUPERFICIAL--EVEN WORTHLESS--BRIEFING. IN SHORT, NO ONE WAS HAPPY.

2. BEYOND PROPRIETY OF REVEALING GOQ PROGRAM TO PARTY FAITHFUL LOOMED EVER PRESENT PROBLEM OF PARTY RADICALS. CRUX OF DIFFICULTY IS THAT PQ NATIONAL COUNCIL CONTAINS LARGER PERCENTAGE FROM RADICAL WING

OF PARTY THAN DOES CABINET OR PQ NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DELEGATION. THESE "RADICALS" DISAPPROVE OF GOQ POLICIES DESIGNED PLEASE VARIOUS BUSINESS ELEMENTS AS WELL AS FRANCOPHONE MIDDLE CLASS (REFTEL "B"). SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION IN 1974, THESE PROGRESSIVES HAVE BEEN TEPID IN THEIR APPROVAL OF REFERENDUM STRATEGY WHICH WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT NOVEMBER 15 ELECTION VICTORY.

HOWEVER, IT STILL APPEARS, GIVEN THE RECENT FLUSH OF VICTORY, THAT RADICALS WILL NOT GIVE GOVERNMENT TOO MUCH TROUBLE BEFORE NEXT PARTY CONGRESS SCHEDULED FOR MAY. AT THAT TIME, PARTY POLICIES AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION WILL BE OPEN FOR DEBATE. AFTER THEIR UNACCUSTOMED SILENCE THE VOCAL MINORITY IN THE PARTI QUEBECOIS WILL PROBABLY FIND ITS VOICE AGAIN.

3. LEVESQUE AND HIS CABINET SHOULD BE ABLE, NONETHELESS, TO CONVINCE MOST OF PARTY OF THE NEED TO MAKE COMPROMISES AND REMAIN UNIFIED AS STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY INTENSIFIES. HOWEVER, SHOULD REFERENDUM BE LOST, PREMIER IS WELL AWARE THAT RADICALS WILL VERY PROBABLY BECOME EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO HANDLE. IN FACT, SOME ANALYSTS, SUCH AS DOMINQUE CLIFT OF MONTREAL STAR, GO SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT LEVESQUE MAY NOT EXPECT TO WIN REFERENDUM ON QUEBEC'S INDEPENDENCE. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 QUEBEC 00091 031628Z

THIS IS REASON HE HAS MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF SEVERAL REFERENDUMS WHILE ATTEMPTING BROADEN PQ'S VOTER APPEAL TO ENABLE PARTY TO HOLD ON TO POWER REGARDLESS OF REFERENDUM OUTCOME.

4. REFERENDUM STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED BY PQ TO OVERCOME VOTER RESISTENCE TO INDEPENDENCE ADVOCACY. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THIS STRATEGY PLAYED MAJOR ROLE IN ATTRACTING BROAD SUPPORT WHICH ENABLED PQ WIN LAST NOVEMBER'S ELECTION. LEVESQUE IS AWARE OF IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF KEEPING REFERENDUM IN PARTY PROGRAM AND IN MODERATING PARTY IMAGE. HOWEVER, HE NOW WISHES AVOID PREMATURE CLASH WITH RADICALS BEFORE HE CAN DILUTE THEIR DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION IN PARTY COUNCILS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF RELATIVELY CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WHICH HAVE JOINED PARTY IN LARGE NUMBERS SINCE 1974. MCNAMARA

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